

Statement of Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
April 14, 2005

I rise in the strongest possible opposition to this special interest bill, which massively tilts the playing field in favor of banks and credit card companies and against ordinary workers and their families.

To those who argue the bill only punishes wealthy debtors, ***I have one thing to say – read the bill.***

Read how the bill gives creditors ***massive new rights to bring threatening motions against low income debtors***; how it makes it ***next to impossible for people below the poverty line to keep their house or their car in bankruptcy***; how it ***limits even innocent victims of identity theft from obtaining bankruptcy relief.***

To those who claim the bill protects spouses and children, I would ask them if they are aware that the bill creates ***major new categories of non-dischargeable debt*** that compete directly against child support and alimony payments; whether they are aware the bill allows ***landlords to evict battered women*** in financial distress without bankruptcy court approval.

To those who assert the bill cracks down on creditor abuse, I would ask them if they realize the bill does ***absolutely nothing to discourage abusive under-age lending, nothing to discourage reckless lending to the developmentally disabled, nothing to regulate the practice of ‘subprime’ lending to persons with no means or little ability to repay their debts, and nothing to crack down on sleazy lenders that charge members of the Armed Forces 500% interest per year*** or more.

This is why the bill opposed by ***every consumer group***, by the ***bankruptcy judges, trustees and law professors***, by ***organized labor***, by

military groups, by civil rights groups, and by every major group concerned about seniors, women, and children.

The truth is *every Member of Congress should be embarrassed by this bill.*

We should be all be embarrassed that instead of repealing the single biggest loophole in the bankruptcy code -- the homestead exemption – the bill places only weak obstacles in its place. Instead of protecting women and health care providers from those who would terrorize abortion clinics, we lay out a blue print for avoiding their debts. Instead of helping individuals who have lost their job or faced a health care emergency, we deny them the chance for a fresh start.

We should all be embarrassed by the unfair and abusive process under which this bill has come up. No hearings. All 19 amendments opposed in Committee before they were even offered. All 31 Amendments submitted to the Rules Committee ruled out of order.

By passing this bill in this form, the Majority is telling the American people that it is *more important to help credit card companies than innocent spouses and children.* That it is *more important to protect corporate scam artists than workers losing their pensions.* That it is *more important to protect unscrupulous lenders than disabled veterans.*

By passing this bill, the Majority will be telling the American people that all that talk about values and morals last November was just that – talk. I urge a No vote.